

VZCZCXRO7776
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #0016/01 0031031
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 031031Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3728
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 6494
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1611
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3430
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000016

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/03/2017
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KISL](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [ASEC](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAI FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES BOMBINGS

REF: A. BANGKOK 3 (WINAI ON BOMBINGS)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 2 (BOMBINGS)
[1](#)C. 06 BANGKOK 7594 (CASE AGAINST THAKSIN)

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Thai Foreign Minister Nitya "Nit" Pibulsonggram told the Ambassador the cabinet was consumed with speculation about the New Year's Eve bombings and believed former Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to be involved. Nit expressed low confidence that the RTG could build a case against the perpetrators. He bemoaned public criticism of the interim administration as ineffective and noted journalists had given coverage to former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's denial of involvement in the bombings. The Ambassador urged Nit to encourage security and prosecutorial officials to focus on building an evidence-based case against the bombers. End Summary.

FM BLAMES CHAVALIT

[1](#)2. (C) Thai Foreign Minister Nitya "Nit" Pibulsonggram met with the Ambassador at the Embassy on January 3, when visiting to offer RTG condolences on the death of Former President Ford. Nit said the cabinet had devoted that day's morning meeting entirely to theorizing about the perpetrators of the December 31 bombings. Nit said it was clear that the Surayud administration's political opponents had orchestrated the bombings. The RTG's speculation focused intensively on former Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh; Chavalit had publicly signaled his interest in assuming a leadership position in Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party, presumably in order to become Thailand's next Prime Minister. He had publicly criticized the interim administration and the Council for National Security, presumably because he and his allies were excluded from the post-coup cabinet. And Chavalit had the character and nefarious network to carry out such attacks.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador remarked that Nit's views tracked with those expressed by General Winai Phattiyakul on January 1 (ref A). The Ambassador repeated to Nit the counsel he had provided Winai, that the RTG would need more than just a theory, however persuasive that theory might be. The RTG could not appear to be disregarding forensic evidence that implied the involvement of southern separatists. Nit expressed doubt that the RTG, being bound to uphold the rule of law, could build a case that would implicate Chavalit or

other allies of former Prime Minister Thaksin in the bombings. The Ambassador, citing the investigations of public transportation bombings in London and Jemaah Islamiyah bombings in Indonesia, said he did not see that following legal procedures would necessarily hamper the investigation.

¶4. (C) Nit, increasingly exasperated, bemoaned the public beating that Surayud's administration was taking. The media, which of late had not been particularly charitable toward the cabinet, was claiming the administration had not done enough in response to the bombings. Newspapers had published in its entirety a letter from Thaksin in which the former Prime Minister denied culpability for the New Year's Eve attacks. Nit had also heard Thaksin wanted to make his case on television -- but the government would not allow this, Nit said.

¶5. (C) The longer that the government continued to make allegations without presenting strong evidence, the more this process would look like a witch hunt, the Ambassador cautioned. And although the RTG might not want Thaksin on Thai television, barring him from the local airwaves might just lead him to speak out on CNN or other international networks. Dejected, Nit asked quasi-rhetorically, "What can we do?" The Ambassador again advised that the government focus on building a legal case based on the evidence.

OTHER AVENUES AGAINST THAKSIN LOOK PROMISING

¶6. (C) Nit remarked that the government's efforts in other areas were proceeding well. Investigators were progressing with approximately 50 different cases relating to Thaksin's

BANGKOK 00000016 002 OF 002

abuse of power while in office. Irregularities involved in a substantial loan to the Burmese government, as well as in a passport modernization program, offered promising avenues. These might come to fruition around March 2007, at which point the RTG could revoke Thaksin's diplomatic passport.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Although Nit closed on an optimistic note, his inability to envision a strong case against the New Year's Eve bombers reinforces the impression -- indeed, commonly expressed in the press, much to Nit's dismay -- that the cabinet's performance remains unimpressive. Despite having all the tools of the government apparatus at their disposal, top RTG officials seem not to realize the need to go beyond elucidating conspiracy theories (whether accurate or not). The rush to judgment about the bombings (examined in further detail septel) illustrates a lack of sophistication and, with the government's position on the matter now public, could have serious and deleterious ramifications as further facts about the attacks come to light.

BOYCE